

**Board of Conservation and Recreation
James River State Park
Gladstone, Virginia
July 27, 2012**

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Present

Mark E. Smith, Chair
Alan D. Albert
Sheryl D. Swinson
Robert L. Wilkerson

W. Bruce Wingo, Vice Chair
Daniel F. Rinzel
Alexander I. Vanegas

Board of Conservation and Recreation Members Not Present

Steve L. Apicella
William E. Small

James W. Beamer
Andrea Young

DCR Staff Present

Jeb Wilkinson, Chief Deputy Director
Joe Elton, Director, Division of State Parks
Danette Poole, Director, Division of Planning and Recreation Resources
Michael Fletcher, Board and Constituent Services Liaison
Nancy Heltman, Visitor Service Manager
Chuck Wyatt, Central Administration Manager
Craig Seaver, District Operations Manager
Lynn Crump, Environmental Program Planner
Mark Schupp, Manager, James River State Park

Others Present

Jim Council, Virginia Scenic River Board
Everett Gee, III, Virginia Canopy Tours, LLC.
Patti Jackson, Virginia Scenic River Board
Lou Wallace, Clinch River Valley Initiative
Buzz Witt, Clinch River Valley Initiative

Call to Order

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order. A quorum was declared present.

Mr. Schupp welcomed the Board to the park. He said that James River State Park has more than 1,500 acres and includes three miles of river frontage. The park opened in 1999.

Chairman Smith noted that William E. Small had been appointed to replace Gwen Mason and that Alex Vanegas had been appointed to replace David Watts. He welcomed Mr. Vanegas to the meeting.

Approval of Minutes from April 23, 2012

MOTION: Mr. Wingo moved that the minutes from the April 23, 2012 meeting of the Board of Conservation and Recreation be approved as submitted.

SECOND: Mr. Wilkerson

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Director's Report

Mr. Wilkinson welcomed Mr. Vanegas to the Board.

Mr. Wilkinson said that one of the highlights over the past several months was the grand opening of High Bridge. He distributed commemorative posters. He said that a video is available on the DCR web page that shows an aerial view of the bridge. Mr. Wilkinson expressed appreciation to Mr. Wingo and Norfolk Southern. He said that High Bridge Trail and New River Trail State Parks are linear trails that see tremendous usage.

Mr. Wilkinson said that the Ivanhoe parking lot at New River Trail had also been opened.

Mr. Wilkinson said that Youth Conservation Corp programs were ongoing.

Chairman Smith asked the age bracket for the YCC. Mr. Elton said that the program was for youth ages 14-17.

Mr. Schuppin said that a group was currently at James River State Park. He said it is a very beneficial program.

Mr. Wilkinson said that DCR was making progress toward the opening of Powhatan State Park. He said both legislators representing the area; Senator John Watkins and Delegate Lee Ware were very supportive. Powhatan State Park is located off of Route 522 in Powhatan County.

State Park Master Plan Updates

Chairman Smith said that the Master Plan Update process is a required process for the State Park system. He said that while the final approval rests with the Director, the Board was required to review the Master Plans and make recommendations.

Ms. Crump presented the Master Plan updates.

Powhatan State Park

Ms. Crump said that the only update to the Powhatan State Park Master Plan since the last approval was the removal from the phasing list of those facilities that were in the process of being completed.

Powhatan State Park on the Historic James is located on the banks of the James River in northern Powhatan County. The park consists of 1,564 acres and has 2.5 miles of frontage on the river.

The purpose of Powhatan State Park on the Historic James is “to provide premiere water and land based outdoor recreational and educational opportunities while protecting and interpreting the unique natural, historical, and cultural resources of the storied James River and the eastern Piedmont region of Virginia.”

The 2012 master plan update is the first for Powhatan State Park. All facilities at the park are newly constructed. All additional facilities at this park will be designed and built in keeping with the prescriptive management areas as defined by the Park Resource Management Plan and the guidelines of the Park Visitor Experience Plan.

While the park is currently not opened to the public, the 2012 update places value on connecting Powhatan State Park to other resources in the community when it is opened.

MOTION: Ms. Swinson moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the Master Plan update for Powhatan State Park on the Historic James as presented by staff.

SECOND: Mr. Albert

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

High Bridge Trail State Park

Ms. Crump said that the update for High Bridge Trail State Park also recognized the developments that have been completed. She said that included the full development of the trail as well as rest areas completed by DCR and the communities. This also includes gates and signage.

Since there were some major changes to the last master plan a committee met to review the changes and a public meeting was held to present the changes to the community. The major changes were the addition and planning for three new properties along the trail. The properties are: Rochelle (143.83 acres), Piney Grove (286.14 acres) and the Scott Timberland tract at High Bridge (60.439 acres). The addition of these properties provided for relocating and adding various park facilities to better serve the citizens of Virginia.

Mr. Rinzel said that previously there had been discussion regarding handicap accessible vehicles on the trail.

Mr. Elton said that the policy at High Bridge Trail State Park is similar to New River Trail State Park. If an individual is mobility impaired they may apply for a permit to use their vehicle on the trail. While the preference is electric, gas vehicles will also be accepted. These vehicles must observe speed limits and yield the right of way to horses and bikers.

Mr. Elton said that at this point, only one person has applied for permission to use a vehicle on the trail. That person is a member of the Farmville Town Council.

Mr. Elton said that DCR is working with the railroad to acquire extensions into Burkeville and Pamplin.

Mr. Wingo said that he liked the term "whistle stop" and asked what would be available at each location.

Ms. Crump said that would depend upon the location. She said that the stop would likely include interpretation, benches, water for people and horses. Some locations would possibly include vault toilets and bicycle racks.

Mr. Elton said that when the economic feasibility study for High Bridge Trail State Park was done the estimate was that the park would receive 70,000 visits per year. In the first six months, the park has already seen over 75,000 visitors. Visitation may reach 200,000 by the end of the year.

MOTION: Mr. Wingo moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the Master Plan update for High Bridge Trail State Park.

SECOND: Mr. Wilkerson

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Raymond "Andy" Guest, Jr. Shenandoah River State Park

Ms. Crump said that the original plan for Shenandoah River State Park was adopted in 2011. It was revisited and updated in 2006 and again in 2011.

Ms. Crump said that the request for the master plan review was to adopt an amendment to the plan approving the proposed locations in the park for a tree canopy course comprised of zip lines and platforms as well as staging areas for the course. These proposed facilities are to be build and operated under the Public Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act (PPEA, Code of Virginia §56-575) and authority granted to DCR (Code of Virginia §10.1-112).

Mr. Albert asked if this would be the first zip line in the system. He said that the business had grown substantially in recent years.

Chairman Smith asked if zip lines would be located in all three areas designated on the map.

Ms. Crump said that the areas shown were to designate possible locations for the canopy course. It is not likely that all three areas would be developed.

Chairman Smith said that this subject came up previously. He said that the two questions from the Board was whether the issue was resolved with the Office of the Attorney General and whether it was correctly run through the RFP process. He said there was also the question of liability issues in terms of volunteer and paid staff.

Mr. Wyatt said that the PPEA was a process where private entrepreneurs can approach the state with ideas. He said this was not a sole source contract. The requirement is that the project be published and opened for competition. He said that the current proposed vendor came forward during the competition phase. The concept was initially proposed by another vendor.

Mr. Wyatt said that the proprietor is required to protect the park with insurance. He also said that the Office of the Attorney General was a partner in this process. They have been reviewing the process.

Mr. Wingo noted that the facility referenced in North Georgia was not comparable to a state park.

Mr. Wyatt said the properties were not similar in ownership but were in facilities offered. He noted that the canopy tours were not really taking over that area of the park.

Mr. Albert noted that these types of activities attract visitors to the parks. He said that this was low impact with potentially high revenue.

Chairman Smith asked how soon this would be available to come on line.

Mr. Wyatt said the hope was to do this construction in the coming winter. He said that work had to be done then because of tree cover in other seasons.

Ms. Crump said that DCR had called for public input and had a public input meeting where few showed up and there were no negative comments to the proposal. Under the PPEA process public notification is required and a few comments were received. Chuck Wyatt said that DCR did have discussions with the County. The County has no objections but did want to work with DCR in terms of coordinating EMS and rescue personnel.

Mr. Wingo asked where these had been proposed before.

Mr. Elton said that previously another vendor had proposed canopy tours at Pocahontas, Leesylvania, Mason Neck and Shenandoah State Parks.

Chairman Smith called for public comment. There was no additional public comment.

Mr. Wingo said there were many unknowns with the proposal.

Mr. Wyatt said that there is a very specific path with the PPEA. He said that DCR was now in the detail stage proposal. He said that initially money had to be provided to cover trips and investigations into other systems.

Mr. Wingo asked if it would be possible to bring this back to the Board after the Office of the Attorney General had given final approval.

Ms. Crump said that the approval of the master plan was to allow DCR to move ahead with the proposal. She said that the master plan is no guarantee for one particular company or another.

Mr. Rinzel asked if the contract would be brought back to the Board.

Mr. Wyatt said that was not ordinarily part of the process. He said that DCR has the authority to enter into the long term process to build and update. He said that DCR would also have to get authorization from the Governor, the Department of General Services, and the Office of the Attorney General as well as a group referred to as the PPEA advisory commission.

Mr. Wingo asked if a decision had been made regarding where to draw the line with commercial operations in the parks.

Mr. Elton said that since the 1930s state parks have worked with concessionaires to run food service, horse livery and other services.

Mr. Wingo said that he felt there were a lot of unknown details and that he did not believe he could support the proposal.

Chairman Smith said that the Board was recommending approval of the proposed master plan amendment but that this was not final. He asked that staff provide an update at the next Board meeting.

MOTION: Mr. Albert moved that the Virginia Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the amendment to the master plan for Raymond “Andy” Guest Shenandoah River State Park as presented by staff.

SECOND: Mr. Rinzel

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried with Mr. Wingo and Mr. Wilkerson voting no.

Planning and Recreation Resources Update

Ms. Poole gave the Planning and Recreation Resources update.

2013 Virginia Outdoors Plan

Staff is working on the 10th statewide comprehensive outdoors plan. This will be the first time the plan is completely digital.

Since April:

- 2nd Technical Advisory Committee meeting held in May
- Staff developing annotated outline; soliciting updates from state/federal agencies/PDCs
- Seeking intern to assist with GIS mapping layers

Design and Construction

Projects completed:

- Twin Lakes dam restoration
- Staunton River drainfield
- Crow’s Nest parking area

Ongoing projects:

- Powhatan State Park – Phase I development
 - 75% complete
 - Paving started
 - River Road under construction
 - \$7.5M Total Budget
 - Scheduled for completion – January 2013

- New River Trail
 - Hotel stabilization
 - 22% complete
 - Maintenance area
 - Bids due July 25
 - Office renovations
 - Bids due August 22

Grants

Land and Water Conservation Fund

- 20 applications received requesting \$2.5M
- Represent project total cost of approx. \$6.7M
- Approx. \$1 million available
- 10 projects selected for funding: currently under review for environmental policy compliance

Recreational Trails Program

- Grant cycle closed April 13
- 80% - 20% Federal/local match
- 30% motorized (ATV, off road, etc.), 30% non-motorized, 40% diversified/multi-use trails
- 46 applicants requested \$4.6M in assistance
- \$1.6 million available
- Advisory Committee met in June – recommended 12 projects for funding

Master Planning

2012 Updates

- High Bridge, Shenandoah River, Powhatan
- Holliday Lake, Wilderness Road (fall)

New Parks

- Biscuit Run (under way)
- Mayo River – on hold until 2103

State Parks Update

Mr. Elton gave the State Parks update.

Mr. Elton said that the summer of 2012 had been a summer of storms. He showed pictures of damage at Hungry Mother, Douthat and Holliday Lake State Parks.

Storm damage:

- 11 parks
- Debris clean up \$125,432
- Facility damage \$ 81,819
- Total \$207,251

Mr. Wingo asked if the parks would receive federal funding.

Mr. Elton said that the Governor had applied for federal funding through FEMA. He said that parks might be eligible for some of that funding. He also thought there would be funds through risk management.

Mr. Elton reviewed the attendance and revenue numbers:

Attendance Year To Date June 30

2010	2011	Change	2012	Change
3,400,532	3,403,934	0.10%	3,848,599	13.10%

Revenue Year To Date June 30

2010	2011	Change	2012	Change
\$5,784,103	\$7,092,429	22.60%	\$8,662,639	22.10%

2012 Memorial Day Weekend - \$688,225 - a 15% increase above 2011

2012 4th of July - \$1,197,074 - down 10.19% from 2011 (weather impacted 11 parks)

Mr. Elton reviewed the following events:

- High Bridge Trail Dedication
- Horse Trailer Parking Lot at New River Trail State Park
- Caledon Natural Area is now Caledon State Park

Mr. Elton introduced central park staff who gave overviews of their areas of responsibility.

Craig Seaver, Field Operations Manager

- Provide operational support for Virginia's 35 State Parks. Supervise and Manage 6 District Park Managers and 35 State Park Sites.
- Act as a liaison for park field staff within the Division of State Parks Central Office and other DCR Divisions
- Collaborate with State Parks Director, Central Administration Manager and Visitor Services Manager on issue that affect park operations in areas of budget, personnel, procurement, equipment, facilities, customer service, interpretive/educational programming, risk management, and capital construction.

- Implement best management practices within state parks and among staff for maintenance and operations of state parks.
- Promote teamwork, esprit de corps, and collaboration among park staff

Chuck Wyatt – Parks Central Administration Manager

- Natural and Cultural Resources...planning and management
- Maintenance, facilities, grounds
- Training
- Logistics and Signage
- Finance and Budget
- Enterprise Activities and Public-Private Partnerships
- Human Resource Management

Accomplishments, Major Projects

- Integrating resource management into overall park operations
- Revenue production a big priority – visitor revenues up 7% in FY12
- Redesigned our budget process to be more accountable and to put money into priorities
- Expanding our Ranger Training Academy to comprehensively address staff competencies and create career paths
- Creating a more collaborative approach to HR and financial issues. Including more automation

Nancy Heltman, Visitors Services Manager

Marketing

- Coordinate statewide and local marketing and promotional support for State Parks
- Development of partnerships, corporate sponsors, grand funding, special event planning
- Works with DCR Public Communications Office and Virginia Tourism

Visitor Experience

- Increasing opportunities for professional development; ramped up marketing for programming tied to nationally promoted events
- 2011 – 13,500 programs were presented to 330,000 participants

Community Engagement and Volunteerism

- For 2011 volunteer participation increased by 34%

Reservation and Information Center

- Expansion of reservation support to programs and referrals for event planning and programs
- On the horizon: new call distribution center

At this time the Board recessed for lunch

Natural Heritage Update

Mr. Tom Smith gave the Natural Heritage update.

Chairman Smith gave an overview of natural heritage inventory highlights. He said staff had catalogued new species including the Yadkin hedge nettle at Chippokes State Park and dragonfly discoveries that include the snake tail and club tail exuviae.

Chairman Smith said that DCR was working on a publication of “Flora in Virginia” with original illustrations. The publication will be available in the fall.

Chairman Smith asked the Board to take action concerning the naming of a new Natural Area preserve. The property is located in northwestern Brunswick County.

MOTION: Mr. Wingo moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend approval of the name “Dundas Flatrock Natural Area Preserve” for the property in Brunswick County as identified by staff.

SECOND: Ms. Swinson

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Clinch River State Park Initiative Presentation

Lou Wallace with the Clinch River Valley Initiative and St. Paul Tomorrow gave a presentation concerning a proposal to develop Clinch River State Park in Southwestern Virginia.

Introduction:

The strong regional interest in building support for a Clinch River State Park is part of a larger effort called the Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI). CRIV is a

grass roots effort to simultaneously promote and protect the Clinch River's natural and cultural resources while creating a robust tourism economy.

History of the Clinch River State Park Concept.

Studies have been conducted over the past several years exploring the potential location and benefits of a new state park on the Clinch River:

1989

- Virginia General Assembly passed an Act calling for a study, by DCR staff and others, of the feasibility of establishing a state park at the junction of Big Cedar Creek and the Clinch River in Russell County.
- Concluded that this site was too rugged and too environmentally sensitive for a developed state park.
- This area is now the Pinnacle State Natural Area Preserve.

2005

- Virginia General Assembly passed a second act calling for a new study, building on the 1989 study and covering a broader area.
- Examined the feasibility of developing enhanced recreational opportunities on the Clinch River in Russell County, covering a distance of 32 river miles from Blackford to Carterton.
- Six alternative development scenarios explored.
- Strong focus on the Town of Cleveland as a “gateway” to the Clinch and a state park.
- No preferred alternative was chosen in the study...but it was concluded that recreational development was desirable.

2008

- DCR, at the request of Delegate Bud Phillips, updated the 2005 report to select and detail a preferred alternative
- DCR preference is a full service state park with a tourist information center, hospitality infrastructure, and a comprehensive outdoor recreation and ecotourism delivery system.
- Recommendation that State park be located on the Clinch River in the vicinity of Nash Ford with a tourist information center in Lebanon.
- The Town of Cleveland was identified as becoming an outdoor recreation and ecotourism service center.

Ms. Wallace said that the CRVI understood that this was a long process and that action would not likely be taken in the immediate future.

A full copy of this presentation is available from DCR.

Chairman Smith said that the Board would welcome a resolution to come before the Board for future consideration.

Mr. Elton said that there had been tremendous community involvement with this effort.

Recognition of the Virginia Scenic River Advisory Board

Chairman Smith said that there had been a number of reorganizations within state government as a result of General Assembly action. He said that one of them brought the duties of the Virginia Scenic River Board to the Board of Conservation and Recreation. The Virginia Scenic River Board was dissolved effective June 30, 2012.

Chairman Smith said that the Board would like to recognize the former members of the Virginia Scenic River Board. He presented plaques of appreciation to Patti Jackson, former chair of the Virginia Scenic River Board and to Jim Council, former member. Plaques will be sent to former board members who were not present at the meeting.

Scenic River Presentation

Ms. Crump gave a presentation regarding the Scenic Rivers program. She gave an update regarding ongoing studies and river evaluations. A copy of this report is available from DCR.

Ms. Crump requested that the Board endorse the Scenic River designation of a portion of the Dan River and two portions of the Bannister River.

MOTION: Mr. Albert moved that the Board of Conservation and Recreation recommend that the portion of the Dan River and two portions of the Bannister River, as designated by staff, be recognized as Virginia Scenic Rivers.

SECOND: Mr. Vanegas

DISCUSSION: None

VOTE: Motion carried unanimously

Public Comment

There was no further public comment.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 18. Staff will pursue moving the date to Friday, October 19 and will consult with the Chairman to look for a location within the western part of the state.

Adjourn

There was no further business and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark E. Smith
Chairman

David A. Johnson
DCR Director